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HEALTH SERVICES PRAISED, CRITICIZED

At a recent 2-day meeting, delegates from various health organizations of the RSFSR reported on the state of health services within their regions.

In general, much has been accomplished in the way of improving the health-service network. More than 16,000 doctors have attended and completed various specialization courses. More than 93 percent of that number are now serving in various oblast and municipal health organizations. The quality of medical aid has improved greatly due to the unification of hospitals and polyclinics. All these measures have done much to lower the number of erroneous diagnoses and deaths.

However, there is no doubt that the health and medical services could be much more efficient. There appears to be a lack of interest in child welfare, particularly in the Tambov and Smolensk oblasts of the Tatar ASSR. In these oblasts there are still too many children suffering from dysentery and pulmonary diseases.

Much remains to be done in the rural communities, and only about a third of them have any semblance of operational dispensaries for ambulatory cases.

Reconstruction and construction of rayon medical facilities is progressing slowly, and it was suggested that the Ministry RESPER is not attending to this matter properly. Several of the reports submitted noted that it was also necessary to impress various ministries of industrial enterprises with the importance of building an effective network of medical services.

Although the unification of hospitals and polyclinics has done much to improve services, more than 41 percent of the polyclinics and 19 percent of the hospitals are not unified. Some of the reports warned of the danger underlying poor administrative organization in the unification program. Frequently, unification seems to have proceeded satisfactorily until sudden unforeseen events indicated otherwise. Much of the blame rests on inefficient government health inspectors. It is no exaggeration to state that only five or six of the 918 inspectors have a good grasp of the general over-all situation.

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Little has been done to acquaint oblast and rayon organizations with the particular needs of the oblast or rayon. This has been the reason for much of the inefficient performance of some of the northern national okrugs such as Taymyr, Yamalo-Nenets, Koryak, etc.

In many cases it was noticed that local populations were not acquainted with the various medical services available. It was not until N. N. Litvinov became the chief of the Sanitation Department, Ministry of Health USSR, that anything was done to improve the sanitation and antiepidemiological network of the various oblasts and rayons. In some cases the local apothecary administration and apothecary offices have been unable to supply necessary medicines and medical supplies.

Much criticism was directed toward the Main Administration for Higher Medical Schools, which has not been functioning properly.

Ye. I. Smirnov, Minister of Health USSR, one of the delegates to the meeting, summed up the resolutions as follows: "It is not enough that hospitals and polyclinics be united. It is necessary to have these unified enterprises founded on a well-conceived administrative plan. The Ministry of Health USSR should acquaint itself with the individual problems of each region, and should be ready to aid with men, money, and equipment. There must be improved specialized medical service available to the inhabitants at the various rayon centers. Medical aid to rural communities must be improved, and the role of the surgeon's assistant must be made more important. Medical schools must learn that they do not have to sacrifice quality for quantity but rather stress the fact that one qualified doctor can do more than a dozen unqualified doctors. Finally, there must be greater cooperation between the educational institutions and the doctors and practitioners in the field."

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